

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5284

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As Passed Senate, March 14, 1997

**Title:** An act relating to superior court judges.

**Brief Description:** Providing for additional judges for Snohomish county superior court.

**Sponsors:** Senators Long, Strannigan, Haugen, McAuliffe and Wood.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 2/17/97, 2/19/97 [DP].

Ways & Means: 3/4/97, 3/5/97 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/14/97, 47-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Fairley, Goings, Hargrove, Kline, Long, McCaslin, Stevens and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Hochstatter, Kohl, Long, Loveland, McDonald, Roach, Rossi, Schow, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau, Winsley and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Bryon Moore (786-7726)

**Background:** By statute the Legislature determines the number of superior court judges in each county. Snohomish County currently has 13 statutorily authorized superior court judicial positions. The county has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in its superior court.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has conducted a "weighted caseload" study and estimates that Snohomish County needs additional superior court judges to handle the current caseload.

The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and counties should share the salary expense for superior court judges. Other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff cost, are borne by the county.

**Summary of Bill:** Two additional superior court judges are authorized for Snohomish County, increasing the number of superior court judicial positions in Snohomish County from 13 to 15.

The additional judicial positions are effective January 1, 1998, but the actual starting dates for the positions must be established by the Snohomish County Council upon request of the superior court and by recommendation of the Snohomish County executive.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For (Law & Justice):** Legislation often results in increased workload for the courts. Several counties are in need of additional personnel, including superior court judges. The Legislature needs to speak with the judges about the costs of the entire court system, not just judicial positions. Snohomish County needs more judges.

**Testimony Against (Law & Justice):** None.

**Testified (Law & Justice):** Justice Richard Guy; Mary McQueen, Administrator for the Courts; Bob Carlberg, Snohomish Court Administrator.

**Testimony For (Ways & Means):** These positions are needed to address the current caseload of the Snohomish County Superior Court.

**Testimony Against (Ways & Means):** None.

**Testified (Ways & Means):** Chuck Foster, Administrator for the Courts.